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Inversion and the Third Sex:
Gender Variance and Queer Expression in Anti-Suffrage Rhetoric

Anthony Pankuch

In June of 1909, Bishop William Croswell Doane of Albany, New York delivered a scathing address to the graduating class of the St. Agnes School, a Catholic women's institute that he had founded decades prior. The bishop's subject was the "New Woman," the expanded ideal of womanhood that emerged in the late 19th century and had since come to epitomize the era's broader push for women's rights and suffrage. Though his address had much in common with similar speeches delivered by anti-suffragists of the time, Bishop Doane notably expanded his critique beyond the ideas of the New Woman and, as he characterized it, the "howling dervish performance of the so-called Suffragettes." He classed the New Woman with an array of contemporary examples of gender variance, including the "effeminate man," the "bearded woman," and the "long haired man." These examples, he declared, were "*lusus naturae*" (freaks of nature), and posed a threat to the dignity and positive influence of women.[1]

1. "New Woman a Freak, Says Bishop Doane," *Chateaugay Record and Franklin County Democrat*, Jun. 18, 1909.

In the same year that Bishop Doane delivered his address on the New Woman and her supposed ilk, the Duston-Weiler Lithograph Company released a series of satirical postcards known as the "Suffragette Series." Though comedic in nature, these postcards portrayed the advocates of women's suffrage as exaggerated objects of ridicule, parodying their rejection of traditional gender norms and the domestic sphere. Some of these cards, much like Bishop Doane, expanded beyond the suffragettes themselves to satirize wider notions of gender non-conformance. The sixth card in the series (Fig. 1), for example, presents the image of "Uncle Sam, Suffragee," an exaggeration of the preeminently American character popularized throughout the 19th century. No longer a stoic personification of America's self-image, the figure of Uncle Sam is here presented in a petticoat and heels. Atop his now-shaven face is a bonnet, standing in for the character's iconic top hat. The embodiment of American identity, the card posits, has traded the masculine for the feminine.

Beyond this, however, Duston-Weiler's depiction of Uncle Sam points to a broader notion of gender non-conformance than was present in the realities of the suffrage movement. Critiques of the New Woman and the suffragettes commonly highlighted the movement's push for women's access to traditionally masculine activities, roles, and modes of dress. Indeed, given the clear delineation of rights provided to either sex at that time, any expansion of women's liberties meant an incursion into what was seen as a predominantly masculine realm. Both the "Uncle Sam, Suffragee" postcard and Bishop Doane's speech highlight a reversal of this critique, utilizing notions of gender variance in assigned-male bodies as part of their attacks upon the movement for women's rights. Though Dunston-Weiler's use of the notion varies from Doane's in terms of both tone and specific intent, both frame displays of femininity by male figures as an uncomfortable and freakish attribute of early 20th century gender relations. In both cases, the

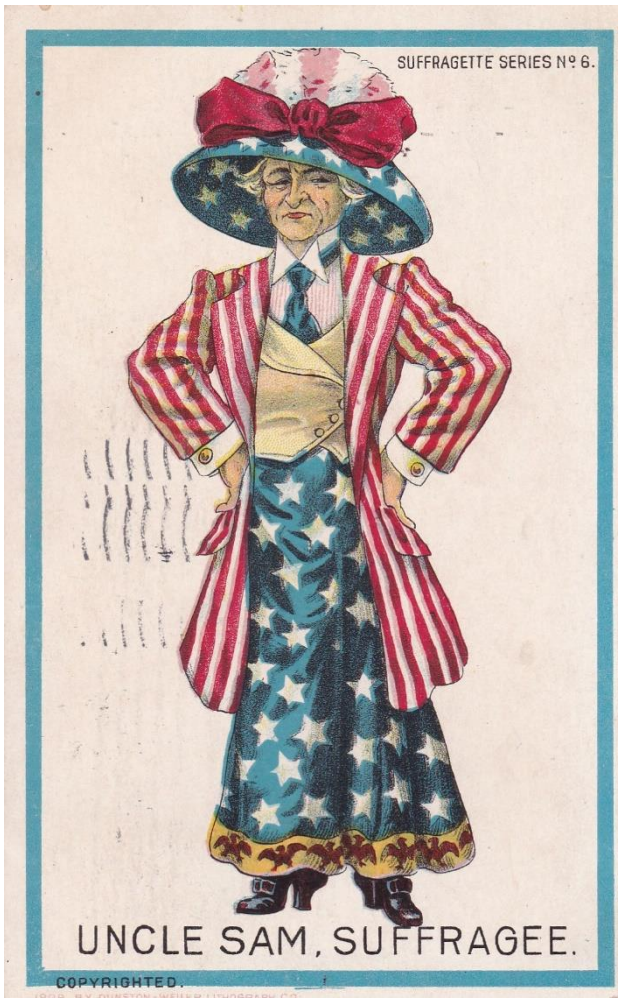


Figure 1. Publisher: Duston-Weiler, 1909. Source: David P. Campbell Postcard Collection, Archives of the History of American Psychology, The Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology, The University of Akron.

target of this framing was specifically the thriving campaign for the expansion of women's rights and liberties.

These two examples are not alone in their critiques of gender variance. Countless postcards, speeches, and articles expanded the discourse around the women's movement beyond the realities of the movement's goals. In doing so, they utilized rhetoric and imagery that suggested a complete breakdown of both traditional gender and sexuality. Whether intentionally or not, critics of the suffragists and the women's movement exaggerated their targets into clear

enemies of middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender society. In both popular depictions and scientific publications, the advance of women's rights became associated with the era's broad notions of queer identity. Rhetoric linked expanded access to traditionally masculine liberties with transgressions of gender presentation, sexual behavior, and gender identity. Further, it highlighted the fluidity of binary gender in the era, as references to androgyny and the "third sex" suggested an ability to exist beyond the limits of manhood and womanhood.

This study seeks to contextualize criticisms of the women's movement within a broader understanding of our nation's queer history. Expansive studies of LGBTQ+ communities in the late 19th and early 20th century have highlighted the era's significance in the formation of modern queer identity in America. Just as the growth of the nation's urban centers helped to foment homosocial interaction and community formation, the development of psychology as a field and profession lent moralizing voices a highly pathologized foundation upon which to build their arguments.[2] Through the emergence of widespread, international coverage of homosexuality, much of the stage was set during this time for both advocates and critics of the mid-20th century gay liberation movement and subsequent struggles. It is therefore notable that such foundations were laid in the midst of another prominent movement regarding the transgression of gender norms. The images and rhetoric examined here can be seen as the predecessors of arguments made by social conservatives in the latter decades of the 20th century. The harshness of the environment around gender non-conformity, whether that meant alternative gender expression or

2. On the formation of homosocial and homosexual urban environments, see George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994); examples of psychological literature regarding homosexuality that will be analyzed here include Albert Moll, *Perversion of the Sex Instinct: A Study of Sexual Inversion*, trans. Maurice Popkin (Newark: Julian Press, 1931); Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1901); and most prominently, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* trans. F. J. Rebman (Chicago: W. T. Keener & Co., 1901).

the mere act of asserting one's right to vote, calls to mind the struggles faced today by individuals across the spectrums of gender and sexuality, specifically in asserting their dignity and rights.

Further, it is worth exploring the differing attitudes toward masculinity and femininity evident in the arguments of the anti-suffragists. Today, even as progress is made in advancing the rights of transgender, non-binary, and genderfluid individuals, observers and those within these communities have highlighted differences in the acceptance of masculine and feminine modes of presentation. Androgyny, as it is conceptualized today, tends to emphasize the outward presentation of masculinity, and as such, "passing" in the non-binary community typically implies the rejection of traditionally feminine fashions and behaviors. This androcentrism ignores the needs and identities those non-binary and genderfluid individuals who prefer to express their gender in a more feminine way.[3] While it is easy and not inaccurate to fault institutional and internalized misogyny for such discrepancies, the sources examined in this study serve as specific examples of how androgyny has been defined and limited by popular media. Though they were thoroughly opposed to any expression of gender beyond the norms of a cis, heterosexual society, critics of the women's movement nonetheless brought the idea of androgyny and a space beyond the gender binary into mainstream political discourse. The methods by which this topic was exposed to the public and the environment in which that exposure took place may help us better understand modern inequalities experienced by the queer community.

3. Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings, 6th Edition* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 122.

ANTI-SUFFRAGE POSTCARDS AND THE EFFEMINATE MAN

Postcards, in particular, provide us with an enticing look at how messages regarding gender, sexuality, and suffrage were disseminated throughout the public discourse. The opening decades of the 20th century, arguably the height of the suffrage debate, have been framed by historians as "The Golden Age of Postcards." Though similar mailable cards were produced, first privately, then publicly, as early at 1860, it was not until 1898 that regulations on their usage were relaxed to the point that they could become popular with a widespread audience. The innovation of the split-back card further encouraged their use, and it has been suggested by historian John Fraser that the medium became "possibly the great vehicle for messages of the new urban proletariat between 1900 and 1914."[4] As such, images produced for postcards provide insight into the themes and messages that resonated with the general public in this era. Unlike political cartoons, which existed within the framework of established sources of news and information, postcards were produced and consumed independently and in massive quantities. The quantity of cards depicting a particular theme or topic serves as evidence of that topic's relevance not only within the realm of news and information, but more broadly within the minds of a general commercial audience.

Catherine H. Palczewski has previously highlighted the subject of women's suffrage in the postcard craze, specifically analyzing the Duston-Weiler produced "Suffragette Series," mentioned already. Her discussion focused upon the function of these postcards as ideographs, encoded in some instances with messages unique to the larger suffrage debate. In particular,

4. John Fraser, "Propaganda on the Picture Postcard," *Oxford Art Journal* 3, no. 2 (Oct., 1980): 39; see also Kenneth Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards: A Study and Catalog* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2015), 5-6.

Palczewski finds the argument that men will be made effeminate by the passage of women's suffrage, one commonly made within the subtext of these cards, to be absent from other anti-suffrage media. This study is indebted to Palczewski's work, and, congruent with her conclusion that such images reinforced entrenched ideas of manhood and womanhood, seeks to find related arguments within the broader discourse of the early 20th century.[5] Turmoil surrounding the stability of traditional gender roles in this period is a topic broached by historians of the women's movement and of America in a broader sense. The turn of the century was marked by fears not only of the femininization of men but of the nation as a whole. The "separate spheres" of Victorian life seemed to many to be breaking down with each passing year. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of the nation's urban centers and the work of psychologists and "sexologists" brought attention to ostensibly "deviant" sexualities.[6] Thus, the push for women's suffrage, despite its prominence in media and public discourse, was but one change in a larger reorganization of ideas regarding gender and sexuality. Placing the "Suffragette Series" and related anti-suffrage postcards within this context, their images can be read as the extensions of larger anxieties relating to masculinity, femininity, and the space between the two.

Many of the arguments against suffrage, much like those made in the movement's favor, came from a specifically white, urban, middle-class perspective. Just as the suffragists commonly disregarded the needs of working-class women and women of color, the rhetoric of

5. Catherine H. Palczewski, "The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam: Visual Argument, Icons, and Ideographs in 1909 Anti-Woman Suffrage Postcards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 4 (Nov., 2005): 385-8.

6. This process of gendered cultural evolution is approached in Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 3-4; and Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 100-101, 290.

the antis tended to rely on Victorian notions of domesticity and motherhood largely inaccessible to these groups. Norms of masculinity and femininity were violated daily by families unable to survive on the income of a single male breadwinner. As such, critiques of women's suffrage and the larger women's movement which centered upon gender non-conformance paid little mind to these everyday transgressions.[7] This disregard is noticeable in the images and rhetoric examined here. The men and women referenced and depicted in the rhetoric and images of this study tend to represent a ideal of white, middle-class society at the turn of the century. The sources examined here are centered in eastern, urban centers, New York, in particular, where activists for and against the women's movement existed amongst an established and sedentary middle-class. This was, by the standards of the era, the most "desirable" representation of the United States, and thus proves useful in illustrating arguments related to the supposedly widespread transformation of the nation's customs and norms.

Considering these middle-class expectations, perhaps the logical starting point in examining anti-suffrage postcards is the topic of the "suffragette husband," a common character meant to highlight the gender-bending nature of the women's movement. In numerous postcard images, the husbands of suffragettes are consistently portrayed as the either willing or unwilling guardians of the domestic sphere. Their presence in this private space is, as suggested by these cards, brought about by their wives' abandonment of domestic responsibilities. In a reversal of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, the public activities of suffragettes have subjugated their husbands to the roles of homemaker and, ironically, mother.

7. For more on the racial and class-based divisions within the goals and messaging of the women's movement, see Faye E. Dudden, *Fighting Chance: The Struggle over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

This reversal draws upon the heteronormative assumptions of early 20th century society, suggesting that women's adoption of a traditionally masculine role—that of an active figure in public life—would, through relationships, force the traditionally feminine role of motherhood upon men. The association between one's existence as a woman and the responsibilities of childcare were firmly cemented in American society at the time of the suffrage movement. American anti-suffrage publication *The Woman Patriot* expressed this connection in a quote from the wife of one Arthur Somervell, printing, "Womanhood means Motherhood—for motherhood rightly understood is not a physical fact, but a spiritual relation." "*Non omnia possumus omnes*," the publication reprinted from the work of Heber Hart, an English judge—"we all are not capable of all things."[8] Childrearing as an element of fatherhood was commonly ignored or dismissed within the anti-suffrage movement, as well as within the larger culture of the era.

The distinction between motherhood and fatherhood is clearly reflected in imagery depicting the reversal of the middle-class household. In most cases, the character of the husband is seen taking on the responsibilities of the domestic sphere either poorly or begrudgingly. In Walter Wellman's "The Suffragette Hubby" postcard (Fig. 2), printed in 1909, the titular husband is depicted frowning as he holds his wailing infant at a distance. Clad in a robe and slippers perhaps more appropriate for relaxing after a day of work, the figure shows little physical affection for the child. To make matters worse for the man, he is pictured in front of a clock near to striking 1:00 AM, indicating that the child, apparently deprived of a mother's comfort, has ceased to sleep soundly. Here, and in a similar card published by the Ullman

8. Heber Hart and Mrs. Arthur Somervell, quoted in *The Woman Patriot*, June 12, 1920, 8.





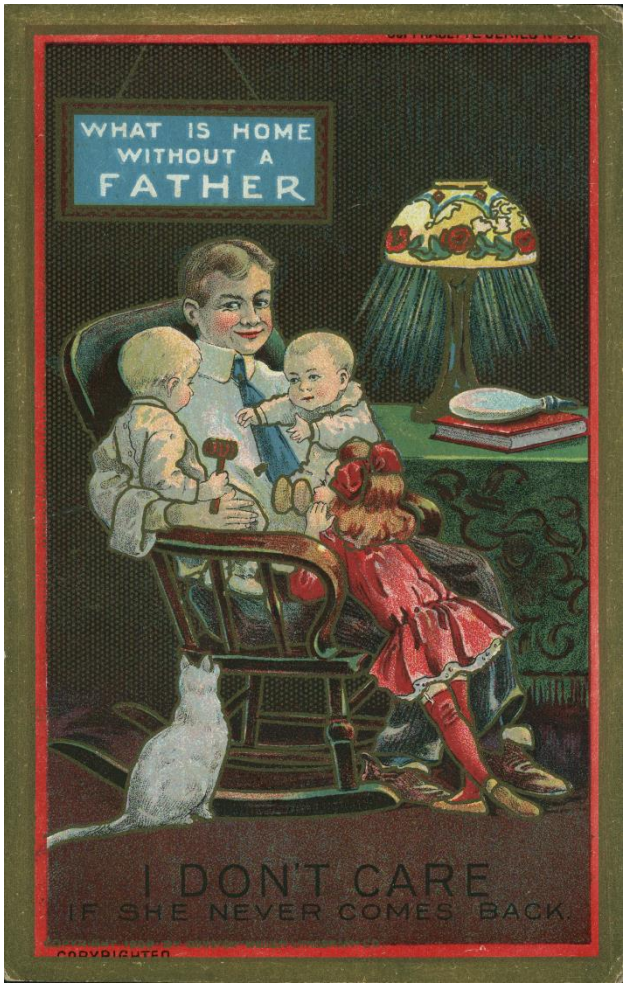
Figure 2. Publisher: Walter Wellman, 1909. Source: David P. Campbell Postcard Collection, Archives of the History of American Psychology, The Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology, The University of Akron; Figure 3. Publisher: Ullman Manufacturing Company. Source: Palczewski, Catherine H. Suffrage Postcard Image Gallery. University of Northern Iowa. Cedar Falls, IA.

Manufacturing Company (Fig. 3), humor is drawn from the inability of the men depicted to adopt a traditionally motherly role within their households. In the Ullman Manufacturing card, the man's visibly aggressive demeanor, while suited to the rolling of dough, does little to cease the crying of his child. Indeed, in both of these images, the dissatisfaction of the husband's child is prominently displayed. The forced subversion of gender within the household is shown, through the child, to have direct and negative results.

The Ullman Manufacturing card is particularly grave in its condemnation of supposedly motherless suffragette homes. Behind the card's angered husband is a framed sign reading "What is Home Without a Suffragette." Beyond its function as an ironic critique of the chaotic scene surrounding it, the phrase references a popular song from the era, Septimus Winner's "What is Home Without a Mother." In lyrics such as "her joys of earth are past," the song references a mother absent not due to her public activities, but due to her death.[9] In referencing Winner's song, the image is suggesting a household torn apart not only by mismanagement, but by grief. The suffragette, ceasing to live as a woman, ceases to live at all, and her husband is left, ineptly, to assume her role.

In some instances, the results of this role reversal are seen to impact the character and expression of the husband, as well. Rather than emphasizing the inappropriate pairing of masculinity and motherhood, many anti-suffrage cards display the husband as forced to adopt a degree of femininity in his wife's absence. Duston-Weiler's Suffragette Series contributed notably to this trope. Though the fathers depicted in cards no. 8 and 10 within the series (Fig. 4 and 5, respectively) display differing levels of success and satisfaction with their roles, their groomed appearances and rosy cheeks indicate a degree of comfort in their new, domestic role. Here, again, reference appears to Winner's song, with one image depicting the phrase "What is Home Without a Father" behind its cheerfully effeminate patriarch. While still referencing the death or absence of a maternal figure, the phrase twists the song's title, suggesting that the father has wholly assumed the mother's role and identity within his familial unit. Winner's lyrics, once

9. Septimus Winner, "What is Home Without a Mother," *Library of Congress*, accessed November 25, 2018, https://www.loc.gov/item/amss.as114820/.





Figures 4 and 5. Publisher: Duston-Weiler, 1909. Source: Palczewski, Catherine H. Suffrage Postcard Image Gallery. University of Northern Iowa. Cedar Falls, IA.

referencing the tenderness and care implicit in 19th century motherhood, now seem to reference a manhood made weak and womanly by the growth of the suffrage movement.

This adoption of outward femininity is further visually exaggerated in a postcard published by Taylor, Platt & Company. (Fig. 6), in which the character of the husband is shown to have adopted a bonnet and apron as part of his wardrobe. Visibly emasculated and nursing his infant with bottled milk, the man appears unhappily absorbed in a life of domesticity. Any traditionally masculine attributes are diminished by the comical nature of his dress and position.

The role of the suffragette, as argued in these images, was to force men into an unsuitable, highly gendered, and ultimately humiliating role.

The act of nursing, in particular, served to illustrate the purported absurdity of men as caregivers or mothers. The biological impossibility of men taking on the role of the mother in its entirety—that is, breastfeeding—was not ignored by the producers of anti-suffrage imagery. The image of the "Suffragette Madonna" (Fig. 7), produced in at least two variations in 1909 and 1910, derived humor from the purported absurdity of nursing fathers. Both variations on this image parody the motif of the nursing Madonna, featuring men mimicking the pose of the Madonna and Child as they bottle-feed their infant. Their rosy cheek and groomed appearance once more hint at an ingrained and self-conscious femininity and domesticity. Indeed, they have adopted the role of the mother in its most literal sense, portraying an icon of motherhood in the realms of art and religion.

The theme of femininization and emasculation of men was not limited to the suffrage debate or even the bounds of the larger women's movement, but rather permeated American culture in a profound way at the turn of the century. As the United States became increasingly urbanized and the closing of the Western frontier seemed poised to put a cap upon the territorial potential of the nation, the expression of rugged masculinity that often characterized America in the 19th century was left with diminishing outlets. Out of this modernity was born a concerted effort by some men to reassert their masculine identities on both the national and worldwide stage. Both the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, carried out in the closing years of the 19th century, were a product of this. These "splendid" wars, as characterized by statesman John Hay, emerged partly on the basis of providing access to conflict and heroism to a generation raised in the shadow of the Civil War. Similar images of feminine or womanly men

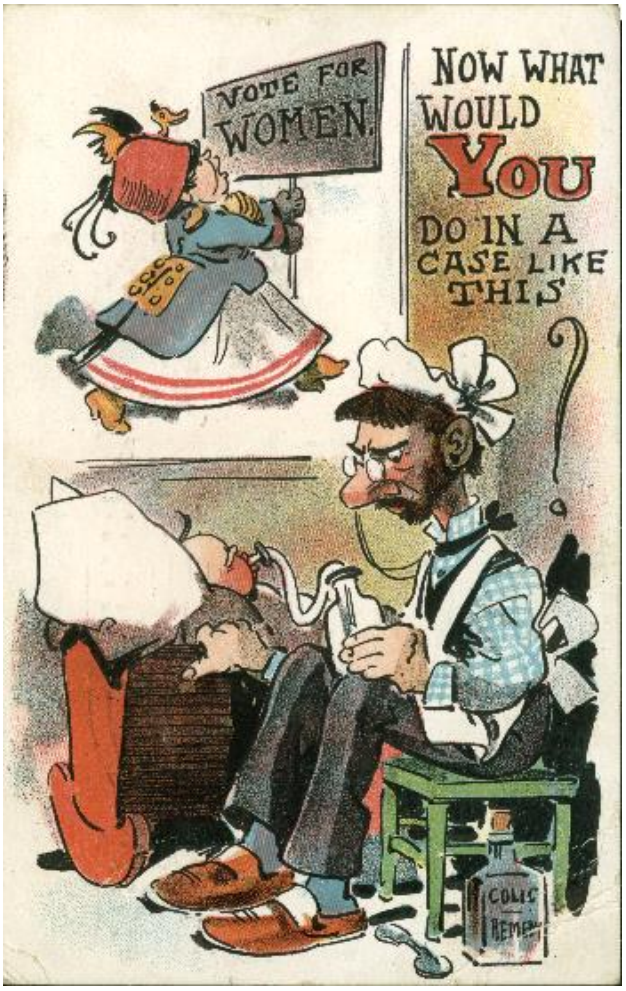




Figure 6. Publisher: Taylor, Platt & Company. Source: Palczewski, Catherine H. Suffrage Postcard Image Gallery. University of Northern Iowa. Cedar Falls, IA; Figure 7. Publisher: Duston-Weiler, 1909. Source: David P. Campbell Postcard Collection, Archives of the History of American Psychology, The Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology, The University of Akron.

permeated the discourse around the Spanish-American War, with those opposed to the conflict depicted as nagging wives or aunts. To support the war was to participate in a much needed masculine revitalization of the nation, while those opposed were depicted as women or as an amalgamation of the traditionally binary sexes.[10]

10. Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 174-179; Frank Freidel, *The Splendid Little War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 3.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SEXOLOGY

National leaders who pushed for continued masculine expressions of patriotism and Christianity were further supported in their work by the emergence of the profession of psychology, which began to gain a large following in the United States in the latter half of the 19th century. In particular, the work of sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing had a profound impact on views of sexuality and gender at the turn of the century. Krafft-Ebing's groundbreaking *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first translated to English in 1892, provided a grim depiction of the relationship between femininity and empire. It was "moral decay," Krafft-Ebing wrote, that led to the decline of civilizations. Low morality coalesced within the cities, where it coincided with "lewdness," "luxuriance," and, namely, "effeminacy."[11] Krafft-Ebing's theory on the degeneration of civilizations was echoed in Germany in the works of other authors, including Dr. Friedrich Sigismund, a founder of the German League for the Prevention of Women's Emancipation. Citing German society as one "in the midst of femininity," Sigismund wrote forebodingly of similar feminine expression in the years leading to the fall of Rome and the French Revolution.[12] Sigismund's work would serve as an influence upon the activities and rhetoric of American anti-suffrage groups, with a manuscript of his *Woman Suffrage* pamphlet circulating amongst the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women.

11. Krafft-Ebing, 6-8.

12. Friedrich Sigismund, "Woman Suffrage," unpublished manuscript accessed through the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women records, Massachusetts Historical Society, 24.

What these purportedly scientific postulations confirmed in the eyes of those concerned about the future of the United States was that feminine expression, particularly in men, was a clear and present danger to the expansion of the American empire. In the case of the women's movement, the entrance of women and feminine influence to the public sphere and the political structure would effectively emasculate the government and lead to its downfall. In this context, the role reversals depicted in anti-suffrage postcards, in which men are forced to behave and present themselves in increasingly effeminate, domestic, and motherly fashions, could be seen as metaphorical of the nation as a whole. The government, a highly gendered, male structure, was in danger of being brought down by the forced inclusion of femininity. The future of the nation, much like the wailing children depicted in these popular images, was being placed quite literally in the wrong hands—hands biologically unsuited for their task on the basis of sex and gender.

Beyond these postcards, the character of the effeminate or emasculated man was a staple of rhetoric regarding the women's movement. While the visual arguments published by the likes of Dunston-Weiler and Ullman Manufacturing could be read as metaphors for the transformation of American politics, much of the rhetoric regarding effeminacy and the expansion of women's rights often had little to do with the perceived gender of the government, itself. The figure of the New Woman, that evolving idea of womanhood which allowed for public activity and more masculine fashions, was often positioned alongside the more overtly despised feminine man as a way of critiquing gender nonconformance as a whole. A contributor to the *Lansingburgh Courier*, concerned for what he perceived as the fading of women's "old-fashioned charms" and their adoption of traditionally masculine fashion, asked women to consider a reversal of the scenario. "Do you find anything in life so detestable as a womanish man, girls?" he wrote in

1892, the same year as the English release of *Psychopathia Sexualis*.[13] A year prior, columnist "Carrie Careless" of *The Daily Leader* implored the growing class of "mannish" women to consider the "unattractive" nature of the similarly effeminate man. Through the final decade of the 19th century, prior to the height of America's postcard craze, the feminine man acted as a warning to women, an attempt to dissuade them from altering the normal expression of gender any further than they had already. "If the feminine man brings about this boon to humanity," wrote Carrie Careless, "he will have fulfilled a glorious mission."[14]

As suggested by this rhetoric, it was not specifically the *political* activities of women, nor the domestication of men, that fueled anxieties over femininity in the 1890s. Broader concerns over the norms of gender and sexuality began to captivate American society. Though Richard von Krafft-Ebing's original argument regarding the cause of national decline would go on to influence the rhetoric of organizations specifically opposed to suffrage, it is important to note that it was not made in a larger work on the governance of nations. Rather, Krafft-Ebing was a sexologist, and his *Psychopathia Sexualis* was a work written specifically on the topic of abnormal sexualities. The "moral decay" referenced in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, despite its reinterpretation by anti-suffrage authors and activists, was not the involvement of women in the political process, nor the subjugation of men to the role of mother. Rather, it referred to deviant sexual behaviors, chief among them sodomy and homosexuality. It was sodomy, not any other outward expression of gender deviance, that Krafft-Ebing characterized as a contributing factor

13. "Man Objects," *Lansingburgh Courier* (Lansingburgh, NY), Sep. 8, 1892.

14. Carrie Careless, "Queer Carrie Careless," *Daily Leader* (Gloversville, NY), May 23, 1891.

to the feminization and fall of Rome.[15] The downfall of nations was caused not by changes to public policy or governance, but by the normalization of private excess and sexual deviance in individuals and, over time, societies.

The characterization of the effeminate man thus provides a rhetorical bridge between the gender-bending perceived both in American politics and in "deviant" sexualities and expressions. As momentum increased around the issue of suffrage and the women's movement moved into the realm of serious, mainstream political discourse, its opponents, too, expanded their rhetoric. Despite their focus on sexuality, the arguments of Krafft-Ebing and others within his field provided an avenue by which the effeminate man could enter the realm of politics. As one anti-suffragist put it, "suffrage was warming up a sinister influence toward the emasculation of manhood."[16] If it could be suggested that women's suffrage feminized men, and the effeminacy of men could lead to the downfall of nations, then a direct line could be drawn between the issue of women's rights and the concerns of national security. Effeminacy went from being a counterpoint to the women's movement to being a direct consequence of its success. In making this leap, anti-suffragists integrated into their cause the rhetoric of the emerging and homophobic fields of psychology and sexology.

The terms used to describe "deviant" sexualities, primarily homosexuality, made their linkage to the women's movement linguistically natural. By the heteronormative standards of the era, the increased opening of the public sphere to women threatened to reverse or invert the norms of gender throughout the nation. This can be seen clearly in the inversion of households in

15. Krafft-Ebing, 6.

16. "Not Embittered, Say Suffragists," *Sun* (New York), Mar. 8, 1913.

anti-suffrage postcards. This notion of "inversion" was, meanwhile, central to the emerging medical discourse regarding homosexuality. Particularly influential was Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, published in 1897. Though Ellis did not coin the term "inversion" for homosexuality, nor did he take credit for doing so, he sought to define the term distinctly from the more straightforward notion of homosexuality. Ellis linked the term with an ingrained inclination toward homosexual behavior. Same-sex attraction in the inverted class seemed "deep-rooted and organic" in his view. As defined by Ellis, homosexuality described a type of behavior, while inversion described a natural inclination toward that behavior.[17]

What Ellis described was, in essence, an early conception of homosexual identity. As discussed by historian George Chauncey in his landmark *Gay New York*, notions of gay or queer identity at the turn of the century were vague at best. The mere participation in acts of homosexuality did not necessarily mark one as a homosexual. For instance, as long as a man retained the "masculine" role in a sexual interaction with another man, he was generally regarded as acting within the bounds of acceptable sexual behavior. Such behavior was considered to be a permissible, though not necessarily ideal or desirable, act of sexual release. The term "trade," common within urban gay communities, referred to outwardly masculine, heterosexual men who would nonetheless be willing to engage sexually with another man. The term "homosexual," along with more common slang terms such as "fairy" and "queer" were applied exclusively to men who acted out the "feminine" role in sexual interactions, especially on a regular basis. Also included in this category were men who expressed themselves in a more outwardly feminine

17. Ellis, 35.

manner, dressing flamboyantly or in drag. As Chauncey writes, these outwardly effeminate men were "the predominant image of *all* queers in the straight mind."[18]

Sexologists of the era tended to incorporate this stereotype into their definitions of "inversion" and homosexuality. Though his analysis focused primarily on sexual behavior, Krafft-Ebing referred to homosexual men as having undergone "effemination," having transitioned, often in childhood, from a masculine to a feminine conception of self.[19] Albert Moll, another German sexologist, classified an invert as a man who believed himself to be a member of the opposite sex, who had experienced a turning around of the sexual instinct.[20] Ellis notably attempted to distance his analysis from this reliance on an internalized sense of womanhood, preferring not to "restrict the use of an existing term."[21] Despite this, however, his *Sexual Inversion* cited heavily the work of researchers such as Krafft-Ebing and Moll.[22] Stereotypes and references to the "effeminacy" of his homosexual subjects appear throughout the book, contributing to the notion of homosexuality as an inversion not just of sexuality, but of gender. In an era devoid of any mainstream discourse on gender identity or its distinction from sexuality, homosexuality was equated, in a highly critical manner, with concepts more akin to modern understandings of transgender or genderqueer identity.

18. Chauncey, 12-6.

19. Krafft-Ebing, 373-5.

20. Albert Moll, *Die Konträre Sexualempfindung* (Berlin: Fischer's Medicin. Buchhandlung, 1899), 33.

21. Ellis, 35.

22. Ibid., 32-43.

In this regard, the characterization of homosexual men by Krafft-Ebing, Moll, and their colleagues fell in line with the caricature of the "effeminate man" so popular in media opposing the women's movement. Indeed, such definitions of homosexual men positioned them as direct counterpoints to the New Woman, at least as she was seen by her opponents. The New Woman and her suffragist compatriots were seen as engaging in an attempt not just to secure the rights of men, but to wholly *become* men. Reverend Charles H. Parkhurst, a notable critic of the women's movement, relied heavily upon this notion on his arguments. In April of 1900 under the rather diminished headline, "Doesn't Admire Them," Parkhurst was reported to have derided those "trying to cease to be women" as "revolting against the destiny to which they are morally, mentally, and physiologically ordained."[23] He had, three years prior, coined the term "andromaniac" to describe women whom he perceived as obsessively imitating the style, demeanor, and roles of men. The reverend was firm in reminding women of their usefulness within the domestic sphere.[24] Years later, human rights advocate Lillian D. Wald recalled hearing this same argument in a Manhattan settlement club, describing a man who believed that suffrage would lead women to adopt the hairstyles, clothing, and harsh voices of men.[25] These critiques were echoed by Bishop Doane in his speech to the St. Agnes School almost a decade later, where he derided women who "[resemble] and [rival] men."[26]

23. "Doesn't Admire Them," *Sandy Creek News*, Apr. 26, 1900.

24. "Calls Them Andromaniacs," *New York Times*, May 23, 1897.

25. Lillian D. Wald, *The House on Henry Street* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915), 266.

26. "New Woman a Freak," *Chateaugay Record and Franklin County Democrat*.

It is no surprise, then, that men such as criminologist Thomas Speed Mosley, when considering the "women suffrage agitation" in the context of political and sexual disturbances, suggested that a remedy was "more likely to be found in Krafft Ebing [sic] than in Karl Marx."[27] The language of the anti-suffrage movement contextualized the New Woman's subversion of gender roles as akin to the purported "inversion" of gender and sex by homosexual men. In evoking the "feminine man" as a counterpoint to the New Woman, such critics evoked the language, rhetoric, and warnings of sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing and Moll. To suggest that the legalization of women's suffrage might enable and encourage effeminacy in men was to suggest that it might also enable homosexual behaviors. The "feminine man," within the wider rhetoric of the era, was not a domestic figure, but rather a sexually deviant one.

THE MANNISH WOMAN

This is not to say that the evocation of queer identity and activity was limited to male homosexuality. Though scientific explorations of homosexuality in the era often focused upon the activities of men, lesbian sexuality was regularly characterized as akin or directly related to the push for women's suffrage. Indeed, the characterization of suffragettes as "mannish women" that occurred so often in the press directly mirrored the trope of the "mannish lesbian" that dominated mainstream discourse of homosexuality for much for of the 20th century. Historian Esther Newton has explored the superficial notions of masculinity assigned to lesbians by the likes of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Sigmund Freud, as well as by Radclyffe Hall, the English author of the groundbreaking lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*. Newton's work discusses the popular heteronormative notion of lesbians as outwardly mannish women in search of more

27. "Woman Suffrage," *Poughkeepsie Eagle,* Oct. 14, 913.

traditionally feminine partners. She finds that, as with studies on homosexual men, literature regarding homosexual women tended to equate gender expression with sexuality. The protagonist of Radclyffe Hall's novel, Stephen Gordon, clothes herself in traditionally masculine attire and is described as masculine in appearance. Emphasis is placed upon the unfeminine nature of Gordon's face, which causes even her own mother to turn away from her. In Newton's analysis, such masculine associations and generational estrangements mirrored the narrative assigned to the New Woman, suggested a link between women's activism and homosexuality.[28]

The livelihoods of many feminists of this era did, in fact, challenge heteronormativity through an emphasis on homosocial interactions. Beyond the female-dominated ranks of most suffrage organizations, many women, particularly in New England, tended to seek out long-term partnerships or boarding arrangements with other women. Often these women were active members of their communities, contributing to local cultural and social activism. The exact nature of their relationships—whether social, romantic, or sexual—is not exactly known. Historian Lillian Faderman has suggested that such women, according to modern notions of sexual identity, would likely have self-identified as lesbians. Regardless, these "Boston marriages," as they were termed, were a way of living that definitively opposed notions of heterosexual motherhood as inherent to womanhood.[29] The tropes of outward masculinity

28. Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinius, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Meridian, 1990), 281-290.

29. Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981), 190.

applied to both lesbians and feminists in the early decades of the 20th century suggest a public recognition of the similar and often intersecting homosocial worlds that both groups occupied.

Such tropes functions as a common theme throughout the visual arguments of anti-suffrage postcards. Though the mannish woman stereotype was nearly omnipresent in arguments against the women's movement, its superficial nature made it particularly well-suited for such a rapidly expanding visual medium as the postcard. The mannish woman was commonly depicted either alone or in the company of the effeminate man, presaging a total inversion of both genders. Both figures incorporated outward elements of their own sex with elements of the other, linking the culture of the woman's movement with the era's falsely equated notions of gender expression, identity, and sexuality in both men and women. Satirical and critical depictions of the suffragists relied heavily upon the perceived masculine facial features and demeanor of their targets. Though still sporting petticoats, the fashions of the women depicted tended toward masculine traditions: short hair, suit jackets, and ties. The women's act of campaigning was often presented in an aggressive fashion, reinforcing the notion that the sphere of politics and public activism was one unsuitable for the traditions of femininity. Such images could be read similarly to depictions of the feminine man. They simultaneously associated feminism with existing gender inversion while also warning of the potentially grander, future inversions. After all, if the activism of the suffrage *movement* made women into mannish caricatures, what might be the result of actual suffrage?

Such depictions of women were not unique to the suffragettes, nor to the turn of the century. The trope of the mannish woman has appeared in response to the public activism of women throughout American history. Such caricatures abounded as women fought for abolition and temperance throughout the 19th century. The hatchet-wielding Carrie Nation proved a





Figure 8. Publisher: Taylor, Platt & Company, Source: Palczewski, Catherine H. Suffrage Postcard Image Gallery. University of Northern Iowa. Cedar Falls, IA; Figure 9. Publisher unknown, Source: Palczewski, Catherine H. Suffrage Postcard Image Gallery. University of Northern Iowa. Cedar Falls, IA.

particularly salient target, for her crusade against alcohol was characterized by the tangible threat of property danger and physical violence. Nation reinvented the idealized "angel in the house" as a public figure capable and willing to better the world through any means necessary. In this way, her and her fellow temperance crusaders broke boundaries of masculinity and femininity. The exaggerations of Nation's perceived masculinity in both the cartoons of the 19th century and in subsequently written history books reflect the perceived radical nature of such gender non-

conformance.[30] As such, Nation functioned as a model and point of reference for the images produced by the anti-suffragists. Her likeness was alluded to in the features of many "mannish" suffragettes, while the small hatchet, that iconic symbol of her work, reappeared in at least one postcard image regarding the suffrage movement.[31]

Though the trope of the mannish woman was thus present and in some ways defined through the discourse of the 19th century, its appearance in the early 20th century is of particular note. As discussed, events happening at that time regarding sexuality and gender pushed the issue of women's gender nonconformance into the national spotlight. Just as the feminine man went from an object of ridicule to a potent and satirical political symbol, exaggerated conceptions of Carrie Nation's violence and visage became rhetorically useful in mainstream politics. As the initial decades of the 20th century progressed, the bounds of womanhood and femininity were being pushed not in saloons, but in the halls of governance and in the literature of an emerging and purportedly scientific new field. The ideas that were formed in the previous decade became part of a rhetorically cohesive attempt to understand and prevent any and all subversions and inversions of gender expression.

Through the rhetoric of this campaign, the performance and expression of womanhood became intrinsically linked to the physical appearance of womanhood. Images commonly exaggerated the masculinity not only of the suffragettes' dress and demeanor, but of their bodies,

30. For more on Carrie Nation and her prominence within the temperance movement, see Frances Grace Carver, "With Bible in One Hand and Battle-Axe in the Other: Carry A. Nation as Religious Performer and Self-Promoter," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 9, no. 1 (1999).

31. Though no digital reproduction of this card could be found for this study, it is described and reproduced in Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards: A Study and Catalog*, 214, 237.

as well. In portraying the suffragettes in contrast to Victorian ideals of womanhood, anti-suffrage artists questioned whether the publicly active woman was, in fact, a woman at all. Such women were, in their eyes, undeserving at the very least of the respect of women. This is suggested by a poem attached to one card (Fig. 10), titled "Women's Rights:"

> If, instead of ranting of Woman's Rights,
>
> You tried to look after some poor sickly mites,
>
> And talk of their rights, long, strong, and loud,
>
> You would then be a woman of whom we'd be proud.

This poem places the advancement of women's rights in opposition to the traditionally nurturing role assigned to women. Situated above these lines on the postcard is the image of a figure akin to other "mannish woman" caricatures from the era. The figure, with short hair, a tie, and masculine facial features, blurs the line between a masculine woman and a man in drag. Their status as a woman is meant to be, in itself, questionable. In combining these lines of poetry with this image, the artist suggests that one's ability to be respected as or simply to be a woman is reliant upon one's willingness to perform womanhood. The woman who takes up the liberties assigned to manhood thus betrays her sex, becoming no more than a man in women's clothing.

This suggestion, like the literature being published by the psychologists and sexologists of the era, brought up the notion of difference between the performance of gender and the biological sex of one's body. In depicting suffragettes and feminists with essentially masculine bodies, artists argued that the deficient outward expression of femininity might speak to a similar biological deficiency. This is not to say that anti-suffragists overtly accused their woman opponents of secretly being men. Rather, through the images and rhetoric already discussed, they



Figure 10. Publisher unknown, Source: David P. Campbell Postcard Collection, Archives of the History of American Psychology, The Drs. Nicholas and Dorothy Cummings Center for the History of Psychology, The University of Akron.

proposed that the way in which one conducts oneself may speak to some deeper truth regarding sex and gender. Just as the man who adopted the traditionally feminine role in sexual encounters was thought to be something other than a man, the woman who sought equal access to the traditionally masculine public sphere was considered to be something other than a woman. The suggestion that a women could attempt to become a man through the pursuit of expanded rights and liberties meant that masculinity and femininity were fluid concepts, capable of defining a person outside of the boundaries of their biological sex.

ANDROGYNY AND THE THIRD SEX

The anti-suffragists of the early 20th century were, of course, not in any way the forebearers of the Butlerian model of sex and gender performance. Rather, the images and arguments explored thus far speak to the rigid nature of Victorian gender roles and the turmoil caused by their disruption. Though notions of what is today considered to be queer expression were murky at best during the era of the suffragettes, the discourse around the women's rights issue nonetheless managed to include arguments highly reflective of those seen in modern debates regarding LGBTQ+ rights. Even as the central issue debated was that of voting rights, anti-suffragists managed to create a narrative around the complete dissolution of gender norms. Beyond that, their narrative suggested a threat to the hegemony of cisgender, heterosexual society. The specter of the term "inversion" called to mind rudimentary notions akin to modern gay and trans identities. These notions were not accurate in their depictions of these identities, and the harmful effects of their dissemination cannot be overstated. However, they speak to a growing awareness and fearfulness of what lay beyond the dominant norms of gender and sexuality.

Those assigned to this "inverted" class, within both the categories of feminine men and mannish women, were generally indistinguishable from one another in the eyes of the anti-suffragists. In characterizing the mannish woman as a traditionally masculine body clothed, at least partly, in the styles of femininity, the antis created a character highly similar to the stereotype of the "inverted," outwardly feminine homosexual man. As pointed out by English novelist Marie Corelli, "a masculine woman is nothing more than a libellous [sic] caricature of

an effeminate man."[32] The specific form of gender inversion portrayed did not matter so much as did the broad idea of a contrast between biological sex and gender expression. Both the mannish woman and feminine man suggested that gender norms be just that—norms, constructed socially and capable of being dissolved by those who wished to do so. Both stereotypes represented what Edward Carpenter characterized as the "extreme and exaggerated types" of the "intermediate race," those who found themselves attracted to the total abandonment of their assigned gender roles. The "intermediate" man was one who preferred traditionally feminine fashions, the love of other men, and involvement in "women's work." Carpenter meanwhile described the extreme "intermediate" woman as a "markedly aggressive person," muscular in figure and uncontrollable in the "furor" of their love.[33] Both types belonged to the same class, existing beyond binary notions of gender expression.

This concept, that of the "intermediate race," was a common rhetorical companion of "inversion," and suggested an additional element to the foreseen breakdown of cisgender, heteronormative culture in anti-suffrage arguments. The discourse of the turn of the century was obsessive in its references to "intermediate" types. References to a space between binary sex and gender appeared commonly in the era's popular press. In addition to the term "intermediate," those seen to exist between manhood and womanhood were referred to as "androgynes" or as members of the "third sex." To be included in this sect of humanity was not difficult. As early as 1876, the *Catskill Recorder* joked that "men who play croquet are now called 'the third sex.'"[34]

32. Marie Corelli, *Woman, or Suffragette? A Question of National Choice* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1907), 16-17.

33. Edward Carpenter, *An Unknown People*, 2nd Edition (London: A. & H. B. Bonner, 1905), 19-22.

34. "For the Boys," *Catskill Recorder*, Aug. 25, 1876.

A decade later, in 1886, Kansas senator John James Ingalls argued that civil service reformers, defying placement in either the Democratic or Republican Parties, were politically equivalent to members of the third sex. Ingalls reportedly drew great laughter in the senate from his suggestion that the primary function of such individuals was to be found in their mastery of falsetto. References to the "sterility, isolation, and extinction" of this third sex, too, delighted his audience.[35]

Despite the varied nature of rhetoric regarding the third sex and androgynous figures, the most common targets of such arguments in the popular press tended to be women. For a woman to be considered a member of this new class of individual, she need only commit a minor transgression of the norms of her gender. A member of the third sex may simply be a women who devoted too much time to her studies, as suggested to alumnae of Vassar University during their 1900 luncheon event.[36] In 1915, the *Medina Daily Journal* reported upon the comments of a Parisian visitor to the United States, who suggested that American women's education resulted in the creation of a "nonproductive" third sex.[37] The rhetoric of critics from Europe, where suffragist activities tended to be more militant, was commonly reported on by the American press. Such reports made repeated reference to the fabled third sex and its characterization in Europe, where it was equated with the combined failings of both men and women. "It is a compound of the worst elements of both," proclaimed London's Reverend F. B. Moyer.[38]

35. "The Long Debate Closed," *Sun* (New York), Mar. 27, 1886.

36. "Class Day and Commencement," *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, Jun. 15, 1900.

37. "Discovers 'Third Sex' Here," *Medina Daily Journal*, May 3, 1915.

38. "Women and Their Work," *Evening Post* (New York), Sep. 19, 1900; "Modesty Missing?," *Whitesville News*, Oct. 2, 1919.

Though the stark positions of European critics were prominently covered by the American press, local references to the third sex in relation to the women's movement were far from uncommon. Suffragists were denounced simultaneously as both pests and as members of this new, androgynous class.[39] Reverend Charles Parkhurst, not content merely to coin the term "andromania," would refer to the era's New Women as "hermaphrodite experimenters," suggesting a failure to exist properly within either of the binary genders.[40] For some, the suffragists were seen as the latest in a historical line of women defying binary gender. In 1894, the *Sun*, a politically conservative New York paper, published an interview carried out with four men at a local club. What began as a conversation regarding women and the suffrage issue was quickly morphed into a screed on the subject of the third sex by a man identified only as "Benedict Two." This man denied that women were an inherently virtuous class, and insisted on the existence of an additional class of women, one characterized by a disinterest in "finery." These "outcast women," he claimed, existed in every city and in far greater numbers than proper women. As for the solution to this issue, Benedict Two continued:

> The time will come when our now young civilization will reach the stage of old ones, which recognize the necessity of this evil and the impossibility of breaking it up. To say that this third sex is created by male rapacity, that its members are led astray, is arrant nonsense. They are born, not made. They are made wrong, not twisted. They would exist in an Adamless Eden.

39. *Sag-Harbor Express*, Sep. 18, 1911.

40. "Doesn't Admire Them," *Sandy Creek News*.

In Benedict Two's discussion, the third sex was not the result of suffrage or deviance, but a natural element of the human race. The "mannish woman," whether she be a suffragette or victim of poverty, was not a woman at all, but a class that must be recognized and, in Benedict Two's opinion, "countenanced and regulated."[41]

Regardless of whether the third sex was an experiment of a volatile new class of women or an omnipresent force throughout history, it was an undeniably important element in turn of the century discourse on the topic of gender. Like the term "inversion," it suggested that one's sex or gender was not necessarily linked to biology or anatomy so much as adherence to societal gender norms. The more radical of the two terms, the "third sex" opened the door to notions of gender expression beyond the binary of manhood and womanhood. Individuals could, whether by birth or by choice, exist in a space between either extreme. This is not to say that such behaviors were desirable. Most individuals who evoked the notion of androgyny and the third sex did so as a means of criticism, to deride their target as a failed man or woman. To exist as a member of the third sex was to fail at gender altogether—these were, after all, the same class ridiculed as *lusus naturae* by Bishop Doane.[42]

Male homosexuals were, of course, included under the banner of this much-derided third sex. The most notable, albeit notably positive, instance of this is in the autobiographical writing of Jennie June, also commonly referred to by the names Ralph Werner or Earl Lind. June's work highlights the common equation of sexuality and gender in the early 20th century, as both dominant and underground culture grappled with the formation of queer identities. In both

41. "Man's Talk About Woman," *Sun* (New York), Apr. 15, 1984.

42. "New Woman a Freak," *Chateaugay Record and Franklin County Democrat*.

Autobiography of an Androgyne and *The Female-Impersonators*, published in 1918 and 1922, respectively, June refers to homosexuals and androgynes interchangeably, alongside female-impersonators and members of the third sex. She operates under the prevailing assumption of the time that homosexuality was caused by an inverted sense of one's gender. In describing her own "dual psyche," she describes a notion akin to modern understandings of transgender or genderqueer identity; however, she does so while contextualizing such identity within understandings of male virility or sexual desire.[43] She goes further to describe more specified distinctions, such as the ultra-androgyne, and even an additional "fourth sex," the gynander—an androgynous figure assigned female at birth.[44] Thus, in describing her experiences over the previous decades as a member of the third sex or androgynous class, June is consistent primarily in positioning herself and others like her outside of the traditional gender binary. The identities she defined existed as divisions of a far more complicated gender spectrum.[45] Without the modern vocabulary of LGBTQ+ identity, June's work located what is now see as a highly diverse intersection of queer identity within the non-binary space between manhood and womanhood.

The eminent sexologist Krafft-Ebing, however, took a notably different approach to defining androgyny than June did in her autobiographical forays into the field.. While the classification of the inverted male was based primarily upon his sexual instincts, Krafft-Ebing's androgyne was a figure whose self-conception was entirely divorced from their biological sex.

43. Ralph Werner, *The Female-Impersonators*, ed. Alfred W. Herzog (New York: The Medico-Legal Journal, 1922), 5, 7-16.

44. Ibid., 17-22, 98.

45. Ibid., 22.

The invert was a male turned effeminate and womanly by a misguided and underdeveloped sexuality, while the androgyne could no longer see themselves as a male at all. Krafft-Ebing's focus throughout *Psychopathia Sexualis* is, as the title implies, primarily sexual, and as such far less attention is given to the subject of androgyny than to that of sexual inversion. By including this definition, however, Krafft-Ebing provided additional scientific legitimacy to the notion of gender identity as a malleable concept. Though his consideration of androgyny as an extreme form of deviation is undoubtably misguided, his suggestion that non-cis or essentially transgender identities may exist independently of one's sexuality is notable as a precursor to modern understandings of queer identity.[46]

Though contrasting, the theories of both June and Krafft-Ebing are notable in their relation to the rhetoric of the anti-suffragists. Whether utilized as a catch-all for those whose gender or sexuality deviated from cultural norms or to refer to more extreme cases of sexual inversion, "third sex" was a term which suggested a breakdown of the most basic taxonomy of sex and gender—that is, the fundamental differentiation between "male" and "female." Amongst the swaths of pseudoscientific conclusions made and published by the emerging field of sexology, the assertion of a genuine androgynous "identity," however deviant it may be, was a radical one. Prior to the English publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, references to androgyny or a third sex in the popular press were rare.[47] After the release of Krafft-Ebing's groundbreaking

46. Krafft-Ebing, 384-90.

47. This study draws primarily upon the databases of the NYS Historic Newspaper Project and the *New York Times*. In the period from 1800 to 1870, references to androgyny and the "third sex" within these collections are largely limited to the coverage of theatrical performances. Exceptions do occur, such as in the case a nun who was discovered to be biologically male. However, such occurrences are limited and do not connect themselves with the rhetoric of suffrage or any other political movement. See "A Male Nun," *New York Reformer* (Watertown, NY), Jul. 1, 1858.

work, during the period in which Jennie June explored and contextualized her existence and identity, references to the third sex and androgyny were used regularly to contextualize a wider range of gender variant trends and behaviors. Chief among these were the traditionally masculine behaviors that came to define the New Woman. The theories of sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing provided a basis upon which anti-suffragists could easily criticize the actions of their non-conforming opponents. Inversion and androgyny, now "scientifically" defined as aberrant forms of behavior, became useful rhetorical devices to dehumanize and abnormalize the New Woman.

In adopting the language of Krafft-Ebing and his colleagues, anti-suffragists, perhaps inadvertently, positioned themselves and their opponents as the mainstream and political offshoot of the emerging field of sexology. Just as the professionals of that field sought to understand and cure cases of sexual deviance, the anti-suffragists could see themselves as curing the nation of an immoral and deviant scourge. Krafft-Ebing theorized that effeminacy led to the downfall of nations, and anti-suffragists were working, in their own eyes, to keep feminine influence far from the realm of governance. It did not matter, of course, that their causes were connected rhetorically rather than literally, nor that they utilized the language of sexology to criticize masculine women just as often as they did feminine men. It certainly did not matter that, as suggested by Jennie June's passing reference to "the fourth sex," sexology was a field more generally concerned with deviance and androgyny in those assigned male at birth. The anti-suffragists wished to create scandal around their opponents, and evoking the language of *Psychopathia Sexualis*—so explicit a work that whole paragraphs were censored via Latin translation—was certainly a way of doing so.

FEMININITY, MASCULINITY, AND THE LEGITIMACY OF EXPRESSION

As previously discussed, both sexology and the suffrage movement were part of a larger shift in American understandings of gender around the turn of the century. In adopting the rhetoric of sexology and positioning themselves as something of a political companion to the field, the anti-suffrage movement partially contributed to understandings of gender, sexuality, and androgyny still prevalent today. Though the movement incorporated criticism of both women and men into its imagery and speeches, it contributed to a growing divide in the popular perception of masculine and feminine gender transgressions. The focus of sexology upon deviation in those assigned male was not accidental. Crises of masculinity played a major role in the national identity of the United States and other expanding nations at this time. It was in this atmosphere that, due partly to sexology and, in turn, the anti-suffrage movement, Americans were made to grapple with the issue of acceptable or unacceptable forms of gender and sexual deviance.

This national consideration of gender played out in the popular press, both within and without the context of the New Woman and the suffrage debate. The offensiveness of effeminate men and the mannish women in relation to one another was remarked upon in the jokes and columns of numerous publications at the turn of the century. "The womanly man is fully as disgusting as a manly woman," suggested the *Mexico Independent* in 1905.[48] The *Geneva Daily Times* was a bit harsher, insisting in its "Worldly Wise" column that "a feminine man is more to be abhorred than a masculine woman."[49] Meanwhile, the *Evening World* published a letter from

48. *Mexico Independent* (Mexico, NY), Sep. 13, 1905.

49. "Worldly Wise," *Geneva Daily*, Oct. 8, 1895.

a “Brooklyn Girl” identified as Polly, who asserted that “if anything is worse than a ‘manly woman’ it is a ‘womanly man.’”[50] Despite the increasing prevalence of the purportedly “mannish” New Woman in American society during this period, the general consensus seemed to be that her behaviors were rivaled, if not outdone, by those of the effeminate man. If given the choice, many Americans seemed prepared to choose the New Woman over any equivalent “New Man.”

The consensus on the relative acceptability of these gender transgressions is perhaps best summarized by the following aphorism, printed in the *Ticonderoga Sentinel* in 1901: “A womanish man is a farce, a mannish woman is a tragedy.”[51] The expression of masculinity by women was, regardless of the views of any individual, grounded in a sense of seriousness by the early years of the 20th century. The suffrage movement, though it gained much ground during this period, was not new. Beyond this, the activities of such women could be argued for on a logical basis, as increased access to masculine activities and modes of expression implicitly meant increased access to the public sphere. Indeed, if one is willing to extend Judith Butler’s conception of gender performance, the act of voting was, until the passage of the 19th Amendment, an inherently masculine form of expression. It was, in most states, a fundamentally gendered activity, an exclusively male method of expressing one’s liberty. Cementing this idea, some anti-suffragists argued that the ability to defend the sanctity of one’s vote by force, if necessary, was an essential element of the right to suffrage. Voting was thus an extension of the

50. “A Brooklyn Girl’s View,” *Evening World* (New York), Jan. 18, 1894.

51. “A College President’s Aphorisms,” *Ticonderoga Sentinel*, Oct. 31, 1901.

biological traits of man, a testament to the sex's presumed physical fortitude.[52] Though it may have dismayed some to see women discard the trappings of traditional femininity for this brutish public realm, the patriarchal and misogynistic nature of American society provided such women with ample justification for their actions.

Though focused on the women of the American West, Peter Boag's *Re-Dressing America's Frontier* expands upon this notion that masculinity could be seen as inherently beneficial to women. Boag explains that, despite American discomfort with gender non-conformity in the mid and late 19th century, women who adopted the wardrobe, mannerisms, and identities of men were often excused for their behaviors. The wildness of the frontier life was perceived to justify such masculine presentation, both for the sake of convenience and survival. As long as these masculine identities were written off as temporary and overtly heterosexual, they tended to elicit sympathy from the public. Masculinity conferred safety. It presented additional opportunities for employment and opportunity, particularly in the challenging landscape of the West. In some cases it was therefore advisable—although, again, not desirable—for women to participate in some degree of gender non-conformance.[53]

The effeminate man, however, was not generally granted such allowances. Within American society at this time, traditionally feminine clothing and expression provided no additional privileges to men, at least not in the eyes of the popular press. While the donning of outward masculinity by women might indulge them in deviant fantasies of male freedom,

52. Mary Elliot Seawell, *The Ladies' Battle* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1911), 27-30.

53. Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 105-106, 194.

women's clothing was seen as liable to enslave the man who wore it.[54] Such overt comparisons between forms of gender transgression inadvertently highlighted the misogynist foundations of turn of the century gender relations. The effeminate man was not given justification for his behaviors in the popular press. Rather, anti-suffragist characterizations of the character as a warning to New Women or as an extreme consequence of suffrage served to highlight the exceedingly undesirable nature of his existence. To choose femininity was to implicitly choose domesticity and the private sphere, a field which anti-suffrage postcards were quick to point out was ill-suited to the biology and temperament of man. Satirical images and references to the effeminate man were comical precisely because they were *illogical*. Of course such a man was a farce, as the aphorism suggested; to choose femininity in what was fundamentally a patriarchal society could be seen only as the act of a disturbed or wholly naive individual.

This is not to suggest, of course, that the true victims of anti-suffrage rhetoric were men. Were it not for the dutiful work of women over the course of a full century, the suffrage movement would not have attained the level of prominence and legitimacy that it had at the close of the 19th century. As illustrated by the long lineage of the mannish woman trope, the 1800s were no kinder to the women's movement than were the decades prior to the 19th Amendment. However, the movement was not stagnant. By 1910, four states had granted women the right to vote, and the movement was continuing to gain momentum as younger, more radical activists became involved.[55] Those who attacked the suffragettes themselves attacked a legitimized

54. "Amazing Sex Discovery," *Medical Sentinel* 26, no. 6 (June, 1918): 253.

55. Janet Zollinger Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 156.

political entity, a movement prominent enough to put pressure on the Wilson administration through increasingly dramatic acts of protest.[56]

The effeminate man, avatar of both national decline and the pathologized homosexual, did not achieve any such sense of legitimacy. In both the anti-suffrage movement and the works of sexologists, the effeminate man was a problem to be either prevented or cured. Neither the women's movement nor those working in its opposition offered a defense of this exaggerated and stereotyped character. To those whose lives were caricatured by this figure, including homosexual men and "androgynes," the discourse surrounding suffrage was purely a forum for mockery. References to these groups in the press tended to focus on them exclusively in relation to suffrage and the "mannish women," never giving them a chance to argue for the legitimacy of their identities. Jennie June's two works on her life as an androgyne were notable because, upon their publishing in 1918 and 1922, respectively, they were some of the only available firsthand accounts of life as a self-proclaimed member of America's "third sex." The narratives of June's contemporaries were otherwise shaped by the likes of Krafft-Ebing, Dustin-Weiler, and Charles Parkhurst.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the images and rhetoric examined here act as a testament to the often subtle nature of queer oppression. The suffrage movement, for all of its legitimate transgressions of gender norms, was not about queer identity. Advocates of the women's movement as a whole existed largely within the straight, cisgender expectations of their society. Burgeoning concepts of androgyny, transfeminine expression, and homosexual identity were all derisively integrated into

56. Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996), 256-262.

the discourse by anti-suffragists with little to no interest in genuinely understanding such ideas. The result was a campaign which effectively attacked not only the women's movement, but all forms of gender non-conformance. Though they did not directly gain anything from the suffrage movement, those who might have identified as queer were subjected to the scrutiny of a movement all too willing to benefit from emerging "deviant" classifications. The anti-suffragists, possessing a greater range of societal influence, were able to shape the narrative of queerness in a way never afforded to those who lived amongst the queer community. The often marginalized nature of such communities made them an easy target, despite their arbitrary connection to the debate at hand.

Perhaps more hearteningly, however, the common evocation of androgyny and the third sex by both the medical community and the anti-suffragists does demonstrate, despite a commonly demeaning tone, a willingness to explore the diversity of human gender. As critics of the modern LGBTQ+ community often argue that gender is a biological and social binary, the socially conservative voices of the early 20th century provide a somewhat ironic counterpoint. For the likes of both Krafft-Ebing and Charles Parkhurst, the idea of a third, androgynous, non-binary sex or gender was a staple of discourse. Amidst the vague understandings of sexuality and gender identity that existed at the time of the suffrage movement, androgyny and the third sex were commonly utilized as overarching terms, akin to modern usages of the term "queer" or variants of the acronym "LGBTQ+." Though such usages, particularly in the case of anti-suffrage rhetoric, where not carried out in a particularly kind or open-minded manner, they nonetheless legitimized the notion that gender and sex existed as far more of a spectrum than a binary. As the strict gender norms of the Victorian era began to break down, non-binary theory emerged as the primary method of understanding gender transgressions both large and small.

Unfortunately, this theory emerged in an environment generally hostile to outward expressions of femininity. Though feminine expression was still encouraged in women, particularly by the anti-suffragists, the general trends of the era tended toward the overt posturing of more masculine expression throughout society—particularly within the vastly disparate cultures of American imperialism and the New Woman. This trend toward masculinity is particularly true in the case of those who openly transgressed gender norms and, therefore, were more likely to be labeled as androgynous. As discussed, femininity in those assigned male at birth was never truly taken seriously by the media at the turn of the century. Despite the fact that *Psychopathia Sexualis* and the works of Jennie June defined the androgyne almost exclusively as an assigned-male figure, androgynous identity in the popular press was typically applied only to those previously assigned female. More outwardly feminine androgyny, particularly amongst those assigned male at birth, was made all but invisible to the general public. The stereotype of the mannish woman became more commonly associated with androgynous identity as the suffragettes, purported members of the third sex, continually made headlines for their boisterous demonstrations. Conversely, unless one were to frequent particular neighborhoods of the nation's more bustling urban centers, sighting a member of Edward Carpenter's "extreme" set of men might be a rare occurrence.[57] This is not to say that "intermediate" men were unknown to the public; rather, they constituted a class generally respected even less than that of the divisive suffragettes.[58] Outside of such ventures into the "deviant" neighborhoods of major cities or the

57. Carpenter, *An Unknown People*, 19.

58. The myth of homosexual communities as invisible entities is thoroughly disproven in Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 33-45.

elaborate literature of sexologists, popular anti-suffrage press was the most accessible source relating to the subject of androgyny.

The media work of the anti-suffragists thus functions as a primary source for the casual erasure and demonization of queerness that can occur through pop culture and the popular press. Their narrative was one co-opted from its psychological context and morphed into a simultaneous attack on the women's movement and queer expression. Though they potentially increased the visibility of non-binary theories of gender, they did so in such a way as to center masculine expression as the sole default, the only serious and visible form of androgynous expression. Further work is necessary to explore similar perceptions of gender non-conformance outside of the discourse of America's white, urban middle-class. Just as the broader narrative of the women's movement changes vastly when one examines it from the perspectives of the working class and women of color, the relationship between the movement and queer experience will no doubt differ for these groups, as well. However, despite its specified audience, anti-suffrage media is an integral part of the evolving narrative around queer identity and expression in America. In order to understand modern forms of queer oppression, one must recognize the factors that have reinforced oppression in the past. The work of the anti-suffragists comprises a dark, yet notable phase in a discourse that continues to evolve to this day.

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